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IDENTIFYING THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC DECISION SPACE

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ABSTRACT

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      Senior leaders often have difficulty sorting through the vast number of decisions confronting them. The senior leader will ask, "Why do I have to decide now?" Ideally, they want to make the right decision about a "way" or a "means," in time to affect an "end." Unfortunately, if they are unaware of how their decision impacts other agencies within the United States Government (USG) and the National Security Council (NSC), alliances, and international organizations also working toward that "end," they may either make a good decision too late or a bad decision too early. Their untimely decision may, at best, be disruptive to fellow senior leaders, or at worst, unravel a NSC way or means to a strategic end. This project will investigate if applying a hybrid of the Army's decision support matrix will illuminate a "strategic decision space," thus allowing senior leaders to better leverage and nest time to make more effective decisions at the strategic level. I will offer the "strategic decision space" model, and then apply USG planning in the Darfur region of Sudan in early 2006 against it. The Darfur case study will include Inter-Agency, United Nations, and NATO timings and decisions to test the model.

IDENTIFYING THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC DECISION SPACE

In mid December 2005, while assigned to the J-3 on the Joint Staff (JS) in Washington, D.C., I was participating in an Inter-Agency (IA) Video Teleconference (VTC) hosted by the J-5. The Preliminary Coordination Committee (PCC) level of this IA team was getting signals through their various military and diplomatic channels that the Dutch Parliament was preparing to overturn their Defense Minister's most recent offer to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) stability and security mission in Afghanistan. The Dutch offer had become the centerpiece of this discussion for three reasons. First, the Pentagon had falsely assumed that the Minister's offer was firm, when in fact; parliamentary approval of military offers to NATO is a standard practice with European nations.[1] Second, the United Kingdom and Canada connected their offers to the Dutch contribution, as it was the third maneuver force to a multi-national brigade combat team.[2] Finally, without this formation, NATO would more than likely have to delay or even abandon International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) then current plan to expand its operation into the southern region of the country, commonly known as Stage 3.[3]

NATO had completed the transfer of the northern and western regions of the country from the US-led coalition Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to ISAF (also known as ISAF Stages 1 and 2) with little fanfare in April 2005.[4] This transfer of authority had relieved tactical pressure on OEF forces, allowed this coalition to operationally focus its counter-terrorism mission on the Pakistani border, and strategically demonstrated NATO resolve in the nation and region. Consequently, for the rest of 2005, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the Pentagon had been encouraging NATO nations to source ISAF expansion with combat units into southern Afghanistan, a dangerous region of the country where Taliban forces and drug lords consistently challenged OEF forces.[5]

The VTC discussion evolved into an examination of the USG's options in Afghanistan if these national offers for ISAF Stage 3 support fell apart. Best case: the US military would have to rotate another 4500 troops to maintain "status quo OEF operations" in Region South. Worst case: NATO's resolve could be called into question, not just in Europe, but also with the enemy and the newfound Afghan democracy. Suddenly, a senior officer said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not sure if we all get it. We are already outside of our nation's strategic decision space. We need to work all options that preserve the Dutch contribution."

What did he mean by "strategic decision space?" In the context of this IA discussion and Alliance dilemma, the phrase made sense. This USG team had only one viable option because the time to revisit these decisions and timelines within the National Security Council (NSC)

appeared to have passed. How had this group failed to recognize and advise its senior leadership just how the Dutch parliamentary decision connected to NATO and the USG's "way ahead" in Afghanistan? More importantly, how had another nation's policy become the single point of failure for the USG's and NATO's way ahead for stability and support operations in Afghanistan?

When I returned to my cubicle, I searched "strategic decision space" on Google.com to see if it was doctrinal term. The search revealed fewer than eighteen hits, most of which were associated with business decisions.[6] I picked up the phone and called some of my counterparts in Brussels and Mons to ask them for insights into this phrase used by the senior officer. Like me, they just had a feeling for what the phrase meant. Although this IA team may have passed the point of no return with the Dutch dilemma, maybe there was a method to reveal an operation's strategic decision space and possibly better manage a future IA way ahead to achieve a strategic end state. Nevertheless, typical of a JS division chief, I filed the term away and went on to the next "issue du jour."

This research paper will explore strategic decision space and the ramifications of recognizing its left and right hand limits on managing a nation's strategic end state. Typical in crisis action planning at any level, most planners and leaders can agree on the end and develop reasonable ways to achieve it. The complexity at the strategic level emerges on developing appropriate means to accomplish the strategic end, and the required decisions to deploy those resources in support of operations across the spectrum of conflict. This paper will propose a definition, an approach to develop, and a model to display strategic decision space. Then utilizing US and United Nations (UN) Darfur planning in early 2006 as a case study, this research will demonstrate the model's validity and value for senior NSC leaders through orienting them on the required decisions and applying means against the time available to shape a strategic end state.

Strategic Decision Space

What is strategic decision space? In the broadest sense, it is the amount of time that actors use to develop options, generate resources, and or influence key decision makers to shape a strategic end. Although it is important to recognize that each national, international, or transnational actor has its own space and acts within it to achieve their interests, the purpose of this paper is to examine the USG's strategic decision space. The central actor in this US security policy space is the NSC. Given the NSC's IA process, along with the constitutional powers vested in the President, the NSC is the central clearing house for managing the USG's

strategic direction.[7] Consequently, a refined definition for strategic decision space is the amount of time that the NSC requires to examine and fully develop the ways, manage the means and influence the decisions other actors must make to create the conditions for a USG security end. Once this space is revealed, senior leaders within the NSC and IA at all levels can operate in a coordinated and synchronized fashion in order to pass their organizations through this "window of opportunity" to achieve the NSC's strategic end. Using this definition, planners can follow the steps below to develop the model that will illuminate the NSC's strategic decision space.

The first and most essential input to discovering this space is to agree on the NSC's strategic end state. IA planners should agree and attach an assumed timeframe for the NSC to apply national ways and means, build the required coalitions, and gain, if required, the international mandates to achieve its end. This end date is the anchor for key decisions that other actors must make to the cause NSC's end. Developing this assumption can be a complex discussion in the IA all by itself. The trick, however, is to keep the date simple. For instance, in NATO the planned transfer of authority (TOA) date for OEF to ISAF in Region South was during the summer of 2006.[8] Aiming at this end state date should have revealed some of the key national and international decisions essential to this TOA (e.g.: the Dutch Parliamentary decision to approve its military contribution).

The next step to revealing strategic decision space is to decide and characterize the various actors that will shape or affect the NSC's end state. These actors range from the US interagency complex to international ones, from national actors to alliances and coalitions. Although actors in the Globalization era come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, the essential screening criteria for them in this model is their capacity to apply an instrument of power. These include diplomatic, intelligence, military, economic, financial, information and law enforcement forms of power. Not all actors may have all of these forms of power. For instance, the European Union (EU) does not have intelligence or law enforcement forms of power, but clearly has a diplomatic, financial, and military capacity that makes them a worthy actor at the strategic level. If an actor has an instrument that can affect or be affected by a USG form of power, then the actor should be included in the model. If not, the actor is a distraction.

Once a comprehensive and meaningful list of actors is established, it is important to realistically characterize these actors. Planners can place this pool of actors into three broad groups: positive decision makers, negative ones, and influencers. A positive actor is one whose end state is aligned with the NSC's and can provide a resource or "means" to the outcome. The negative actor is one whose end state is aligned against the NSC's end date and can deny resources to the outcome. An influencer is an actor who can shape positive or negative actor's

decisions by creating conditions for them to act in the NSC's direction. Developing consensus within an IA planning team on these characterizations may be complex. For instance, recognizing DoD resistance to some DoS initiatives and reconciling which actor is positive or negative will be difficult. In addition, sometimes a key member of the IA or international community is only an influencer and not a decision maker. In many cases, the DoS or the EU simply use their diplomatic prestige to shape an actor commitment to an end.

Once this characterization is complete, it is important to gain an understanding of how positive and negative actors generate resources. For instance, when the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the political arm of NATO, makes the decision to provide forces, it backs into the decision through a variety of military planning and diplomatic policy steps between the NAC, its military committee in Brussels, and SHAPE in Mons, Belgium.[9] This alliance decision-making process normally takes place over weeks. In the case of a democratic nation like the Netherlands, it has to follow a parliamentary process that also takes time to develop a national position and decision. In fascist regimes like Sudan, the decision-making process lacks a recognizable process and will likely occur in days.

As stated, an influencing actor does not provide resources to the end, but will conduct discussions and negotiations over a period to create the conditions for a positive or negative actor to provide some means. For instance, the DoS may deploy a series of emissaries to a variety of countries to generate a major visit to a nation that will cause it to make a decision that supports a USG end state. In the case of the lead-up to the first Gulf War, DoS emissaries "pre-visited" both friendly and "near-friendly" states in the Gulf region prior to the "eleventh hour" visit of the Secretary of State, James Baker, who ultimately secured support of the upcoming US-led invasion of Kuwait to the region. Therefore, it is important to capture how influencers use time to shape positive or negative actors decisions within the USG's strategic decision space.

The culminating step in this model is to capture the environment within which all of the actors operate. Like terrain and weather for the tactical commander, this neutral space, if not considered, can suddenly disrupt and remove the strategic leader's ability to make a sound decision. For instance, there are technical dates to international and national agreements that expire, national elections that occur, weather seasons that effect deployment windows, etc. What is important is to capture all the elements of the current situation that can directly or indirectly affect the end that the NSC is attempting to achieve.

Once these steps are complete, input the identified actor decisions and processes along with the various influencer conditions over time on to a matrix. Figure 1 represents an example matrix, where actor actions are compared against time. The matrix design resembles the

Army's decision support matrix (DSM) because once completed, it will display how opposing actors and their competing actions over time can cause or disrupt the NSC's end state. Tactical commanders use a DSM because it allows them to refine the timing of their key decisions based upon decisions the enemy forces make.[10] For example, a classic decision a tactical commander will have on his DSM is the commitment of his reserve to the fight. A commander and his staff will base this decision on conditions like his current combat power strength, progress of his main effort, or an unanticipated enemy success. As one of these conditions approaches in time, the commander can decide to commit his reserve before the employment opportunity becomes ineffective. The commander's staff manages his tactical decision space.

For the NSC, gaining the same level of recognition and fidelity is difficult because of the quality and number of actors influencing a US decision. To overcome this complexity, the first and key step in this model is to select a date for the NSC's strategic end state. With this date in mind, input each actor's key decisions on to the matrix based upon the time it will take the actor to form the decision and apply a resource against NSC's end date. In addition, for each influencer, use a timeline bar to show the amount of time it will take to shape an actor's required condition against this end state. These decision dates and timelines are nothing more than realistic assumptions applied against a national end.

Once these various timings have been inputted on to the matrix, some analytical steps are required to find the left and right hand limits of the NSC's decision space. First, identify where each actor's respective decisions are located in time, and the conditions that allowed the actor to make this decision. Second, within those decisions, isolate those decisions that required another actor's influence to cause the decision. Finally, trace these decisions back to the NSC's end state. What will emerge through this process is a window of "decision time" bounded by the limits the NSC requires to shape or effect key decisions that lead to its end. In Figure 1 below, a host country decision to support US forces becomes the key decision that may drive other actors, and thus becomes the NSC's left decision space limit. Likewise, the International Organization (IO) decision to provide essential support to the mission is the last major decision that causes the Alliance to meet conditions for its deployment of forces, and consequently highlights the right limit of the space.

In conclusion, the strategic decision space matrix is not an effort to describe how and when NSC decisions should be made. Instead, the strategic decision space matrix, similar to the field commander's DSM, will allow the NSC to react effectively to events and make sound decisions based upon those events. Similar to the Army's DSM, it is important to find a key condition that will drive a decision. In Figure 1, the President will not approve the deployment of

forces without a suitable host country; yet, the host country will not authorize a US force presence unless certain diplomatic, economic, and political demands are met. The IO will not commit resources without US troops on the ground, and the Alliance will not act unless there is international consensus. Given these decisions and their connections, if one decision is not made, the NSC will have to adjust the space and shift until the obstacle with the host country is overcome. Tracking these decisions and their connections may allow the NSC to manage its ways more effectively and also orient its senior leadership within the IA toward an end state.

To summarize, the essential steps in developing the strategic decision space are as follows: recognize the NSC's strategic end state, determine actors, characterize the actors as either positive or negative ones, or influencers, gain an understanding the actors' processes to either make or influence decisions, capture the current situation, develop the matrix, and then analyze the decision space. An example of the planning efforts in early 2006 to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to the Darfur Region of Sudan should demonstrate the utility of the matrix.
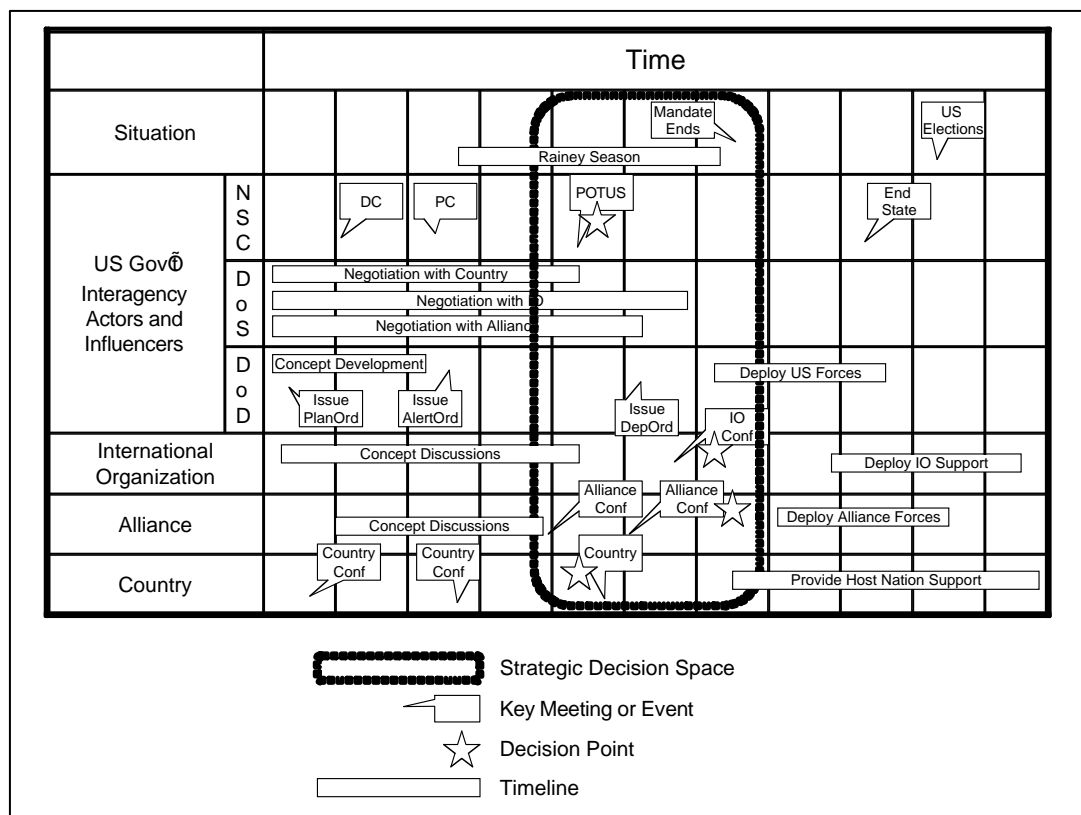

Figure 1. Strategic Decision Space Matrix

Darfur Crisis Action Planning 2006

In early January 2006, it became apparent to the NSC that the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan was approaching a tipping point. For months, the JS, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Deputies Committee (DC) level and below of the NSC, NATO, and European Command (EUCOM) had been working to develop options to build the capacity of the African Union's (AU) military forces currently deployed within Darfur. These AU military forces were commonly known as the African Mission in Sudan or AMIS. Its mission was to enforce the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (HCA) agreed to by the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Darfur rebel groups on 8 April 2004.[11] More notably, AMIS was the only military force that the Sudan would accept into the country in 2004 after Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that the Darfur's suffering was indeed genocide.[12] Although in the eyes of the NSC, AMIS was a political and diplomatic success, the mission was a long way from maintaining an effective peacekeeping military formation within the troubled region. Despite receiving monetary, logistical, and training support from the international community (including the EU, NATO, and the US), AMIS had done little to enforce the HCA.[13] Although the UN had an ongoing peacekeeping mission in southern Sudan known as UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), China and Russia had blocked US efforts in the UN Security Council (UNSC) to expand its' mission to stop the suffering and "genocide" in Darfur. The NSC's current way ahead and the only course of action that was suitable to all strategic level parties were proving to be a bad way ahead for people in Darfur.[14]

The NSC had reached this crossroad because it was becoming apparent that the DoS policy of "African solutions for African problems" was failing.[15] State was basing their analysis on two fundamental conditions. First, the AU's effort to reach a negotiated settlement in Abuja, Nigeria between the Darfur rebels and the GOS was going nowhere.[16] In fact, State's Action Officers (AO) level assessment was that the Darfur rebel envoys were more interested in maintaining their standard of living in the hotels in and around Abuja then actually reaching an agreement with the GOS. Yet, the more powerful DoS analysis came from its assessment teams on the ground. Despite DoS, UN, and NATO efforts to provide training and resources to AU's forces, the reality was that its command could not satisfactorily perform any of its thirteen military tasks.[17]

Faced with failed diplomatic and military solutions for more than two years, DoS AOs were convinced that the situation in Darfur was going to get dramatically worse. When Secretary of State Rice briefed President Bush in early January 2006, both State and the National Security Advisor, Mr. Steve Hadley, interpreted that the President had signed a blank check to use all

national elements of power to develop a new way ahead for the crisis; a way ahead that transitioned the AMIS mission to the UN while maintaining the honor of the AU and protecting the Darfur people.[18] Oddly, the Pentagon did not interpret the guidance the same way. DoD understood that the President agreed Darfur was State's problem to solve and leverage resources from allies, not from the US military.[19]

In early February 2006, Ambassador Bolton, the US's UN Ambassador, began an effort to move the UN toward replacing AMIS with UN forces. Despite his intentions to overcome UN inertia, the Ambassador was going to have a difficult time garnering support in the UN Security Council (UNSC) to pass a resolution authorizing the deployment of peacekeeping forces into Darfur for multiple reasons. First, the GOS would have to be coerced to approve the deployment of non-African forces into its country. Coercing the GOS would be difficult because their biggest ally was China, who held veto power in the UNSC over any resolution authorizing a UN deployment. Second, other key members in the Council, such as France and the United Kingdom, would be hesitant to move forward with a peacekeeping resolution without a guarantee of a significant US ground contribution to some aspect of the mission.[20] The only positive aspect for Ambassador Bolton was that February 2006 was the US's turn to preside over the UN Security Council.

In this month, Ambassador Bolton could use his role as President of the UNSC to request the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) to begin planning for a force in Darfur, despite the fact that the UN did not have a host nation agreement for the force or a US catalyst for major western nations to contribute to the mission. Bolton received several excuses from within the UNDPKO. The primary excuse was "my team is overworked and does not have enough planners to conduct the analysis for a UN peacekeeping force deployment by year's end for a mission that is unlikely to occur." Therefore, Ambassador Bolton requested that the Pentagon provide planners to the UNDPKO in order to overcome this objection.[21] When the planning team arrived in New York on 13 February 2006 to assist the UNDPKO, it consisted of the J-5 Africa Division Chief, a J-4 Planner, a EUCOM Africa Planner, and the J-3 Joint Operations Division-EUCOM Chief. In one day, this team doubled the number of UN planners assigned to conduct the Darfur mission analysis. A small victory for the Ambassador, but at least planning would begin inside the UNDPKO. Yet even with the best plan this team could develop, the USG would still have to shape a GOS agreement and a military contribution to move the UNSC forward toward plan execution with a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur.

This planning environment in New York City will provide the context to reveal the value of the strategic decision space model to senior leaders within the USG for the following reasons.

First, the plan hinged on the two key international decisions, a GOS decision to host forces, and a US one to deploy a formation. Second, this planning environment exposed the IA discussion to cause a Presidential decision to deploy US forces. Third, the course of action (COA) that emerged in New York added another key decision, an alliance contribution to the means. In order to stabilize and improve the then-current situation in Darfur, the planners' COA rapidly deployed NATO forces to directly enhance the capacity of and indirectly preserve AMIS's reputation. This NATO deployment would be followed by a large UN force built around AMIS and non-western nations (yet trained and equipped with NATO capabilities), and would conduct a transfer of authority (TOA) with AMIS in late 2006. Each of these decisions and their connections added a layer of complexity to the NSC's ability to manage the ways towards an effective end to the Darfur crisis.

Determine the USG's Strategic End State

The US planning team briefly met with Ambassador Bolton upon their arrival in New York City. He wasted no time articulating what he perceived and what the team assumed as the NSC's strategic end: assure UN conducting peacekeeping operations in Darfur sometime before the end of 2006, preferably as soon as possible. Embedded in that end state were three key pieces of guidance from Bolton. First, achieve that end while preserving the reputation of the AU and AMIS forces. Second, prevent the crisis from expanding. Third, work amicably with the UN planners, but ensure the development of a plan by the end of the month.[22] The scope of this end state was monstrous. The size and remote location of the region created enormous logistical and operational planning dilemmas. Discovering the means to overcome these dilemmas would be even more difficult.

Determine and Characterize the Actors

The first key actor is the GOS. This nation's end state was to have no foreign forces (including AMIS) in the Darfur region, the Darfur rebel insurgency defeated without the use of its conventional forces, and GOS's oil wealth free from further bifurcation.[23] The GOS was a negative actor, capable of sparring against the USG's instruments of power that moved the Sudanese toward accepting another UN deployment within its borders. For example, the Sudanese military had unleashed a counter-insurgency campaign with the indigenous Janjaweed tribe, while simultaneously allowing them to claim that they were not fighting a civil war, yet simply dealing with tribal conflict in Darfur. Their diplomats were hostile to any international or African effort to legitimize the Darfur rebel factions' claims to territory or oil revenue. In addition, the fascist GOS regime, despite substantial international evidence to

support the US's genocide declaration, conducted an information campaign that severely dampened international reaction to the atrocities. To summarize, the GOS, while defeating the rebels, was able to keep the international community at bay. With its oil wealth, well-established black market, and growing relationships with Russia and China, they also appeared to be immune to the current economic sanctions imposed by the US and some of our allies.[24] Finally, the regime's diplomatic, military, and economic relationship with China and Russia left them almost impervious to US instruments of power. It was unclear if State could gain a positive GOS decision to authorize the deployment of UN forces in Darfur. What was safe for the NSC to assume was that this actor would negatively affect many of the IA and international decisions required to meet the end state, and would effectively use any of its means necessary to inhibit US and international peacekeeping efforts. Finally, to complicate further the analysis, President Bashir came to power in GOS through a military coup in 1989; his efficient dictatorship lacked the transparency to reveal his decision-making processes.[25]

The three rebel factions that made up the opposition to the GOS are a complex group to understand. They lacked a decision-making capacity, yet, were attempting to negotiate an end state that led to a wealth distribution similar to the division previously achieved by the southern Sudanese.[26] Despite some diplomatic and military capacity, it was difficult to determine if the rebels possessed any instrument of power that could inhibit or promote the USG's or their own end state. For these same reasons, it is also difficult to label them as a positive or negative actor. In the final analysis, the rebel negotiators were going to return to Darfur because the US grew tired of paying the teams' hotel bills or they accepted a USG negotiated settlement. They did not positively or negatively affect the NSC's strategic decision space, and certainly could not influence other actors, or provide any substantial means to the NSC's end state.

The next actor is the AU; for the most part, the AU was a positive actor. The AU's end state was to gain international legitimacy as an effective alliance for security and economic prosperity in Africa through AMIS's mission success in Darfur. Although the AU had struggled with the complexity of enforcing a military technical agreement inside a sovereign government, it had been able to demonstrate some military and political capability that offered a paradigm for future security and cooperation in Africa. Despite military and diplomatic failures in Darfur and Addis respectively, the organization still represented a legitimate forum for the NSC to positively affect and influence decisions that led Sudan to accept a UN force in Darfur.[27] Finally, with proper train and equip programs, the AU could be counted upon to provide substantial troops to a UN led force.

The UN represented the most complex actor to assess. Despite its well-developed peacekeeping process and ongoing mission in southern Sudan, its end state was status quo or no UN involvement inside a sovereign country without its permission.[28] Because the USG would have to coerce its peacekeeping process into action, the UN was considered a negative actor. Given the GOS position and Chinese alliance, the UN's (and particularly the UNDPKO's) organizational bias was that this peacekeeping effort represented a waste of organizational time and energy.[29] Unfortunately, the UN, the only actor that (perhaps outside of NATO or the USG) could apply the most effective diplomatic, informational, military, and financial instruments of power against the GOS and for the people of Darfur was completely able, but unwilling to apply them. Compounding this bias was the UN's lethargy for any Bush Administration initiative in the UN; therefore, it would stall any US initiative.[30] DoS and Ambassador Bolton would have a difficult time coercing the UNSC to approve a Darfur resolution and authorize a peacekeeping deployment (better known as a Chapter VII mission), without a serious US willingness to "prime the pump" with ground forces. Consequently, the UN would negatively affect NSC decision space because instead of being a source of means, it would require already thinly stretched US means and influence to move forward.

The EU represented the next major actor. The EU's end state was to financially support efforts to aid the end of suffering in Darfur without alienating the GOS.[31] The alliance was an influencing actor because the diplomatic and financial pressure the EU could theoretically put on the GOS were substantial. The EU was deeply vested in the current AU strategy in Darfur; however, it was apparent from a UN and DoS planner's perspective that even with its recent military success in Bosnia, the EU was uninterested in expanding military operations in Darfur. Consequently, the EU would not inhibit or assist the NSC's end state with influence or means.

NATO, for reasons similar to those outlined above for the UN and the EU, was also a negative actor. Its end state was simply to assist AMIS in Darfur without upsetting the GOS.[32] Its significant instruments of power were paralyzed to support any USG initiative in the region. Like the UN, NATO has an outstanding force generation process, yet the NAC and SHAPE would stall this process and not provide any substantial means without a generous contribution from the USG. Therefore, the USG's largest and most competent alliance was a negative actor inside NSC's decision space. NATO would require significant pressure from State and the Pentagon to support a peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

Inside the USG, there were two key actors within the NSC decision space to shape its end state: the DoS and the DoD. From a State perspective, Darfur was devolving purely into a military solution. They were convinced that a US military contribution to the AU mission would

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trigger a series of NATO and UN contributions to the region. This US contribution, followed by NATO's and the UN's, would allow AMIS to enforce the HCA and create an AU military success. In addition, DoS could no longer financially support AMIS on the ground and wanted the UN, NATO, and DoD to absorb these costs. State, without any other means to apply besides those already in the region, was an influencing actor.[33]

From a DoD perspective, because a significant US military contribution to enable UN and NATO means did not pass the feasible, acceptable, or suitable (FAS) test, Darfur was simply a State problem to solve or contain. First, it was not logistically feasible to support military operations in Darfur without diverting critical assets from OEF or Operation Iraqi Freedom, an unacceptable risk in the view of the JS and OSD. Finally, any ground operation in Darfur would reinforce the unsuitable strategic perception in the Arab world that the US was occupying the entire Arab world.[34] State AO's viewed the Pentagon's force generation process with the same envy that DoD planners viewed the UN's and NATO's. DoS AOs would assess DoD as a negative actor in the NSC's strategic decision space. Through reading the notes from the various principal committee and sub principal committee meetings, along with those from briefings to and public statements from the White House, President Bush had prematurely tipped toward the State position.[35] This decision would not reduce the IA friction between State and the Pentagon.

Gain an Understanding of the Actors' Processes to Either Make or Influence Decisions

Finding accurate left and right limits to the NSC's strategic decision space hinges upon the intellectual honesty of the members of the IA and international planning team to reveal their decision-making processes. In this case, it was illuminating because at the AO level there appeared to be little resistance to articulating the various steps to achieving organizational decisions and the time it would take to influence actors within the decision space.

For instance, the UN planners within DPKO were more than willing to reveal the process for generating the required forces and deploying troops by the end of 2006. Some steps were sequential and others could be worked in parallel. A good example was the ability of planners to work with the GOS to authorize a Darfur reconnaissance and generate national commitments against its planned force, while the UNSC worked an initial resolution to condemn the GOS. Although the UN could heighten military planning and political rhetoric, the DPKO could not complete its force generation process (requiring roughly two to three months) before the UNSC authorized a Chapter VII deployment.[36] Since the UN does not execute "forced entry" operations, and also did not consider Sudan a failed state, the UNSC's ability to affect the

decision space hinged on a Sudanese invitation of UN troops into Darfur. The UNDPKO planners did not see GOS approval as likely, despite the efforts of President Bush and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to influence key international actors like NATO and the EU.[37] Some other actor would have to influence Sudan to ultimately cause the UN to generate the force. The UN could take some important steps towards a deployment, but until the Sudanese made their decision to host UN forces, a two to three month "force generation" delay was built into the NSC's end state.

Recognizing the importance of the Sudanese decision is critical; it leads to how DoS would influence the NSC's strategic decision space. Even without a consulate inside Sudan, the DoS, through communiqués, conferences, and public appearances, developed a series of lines of operation to coerce the GOS to authorize the deployment of UN forces to Darfur. State's diplomatic lines of operation (or influence) were as follows: win UNSCR Chapter VII resolution, coerce GOS to host UN forces, and persuade NATO to participate in the mission. Although many of these contacts are classified, the important aspect to gain from the State AO's planning factors is the amount of time required along each influencing line of operation that US diplomats would need to cause the UN, GOS, and NATO decisions, respectively. In addition, State AOs thought that within 45 days of a UNSC resolution condemning Sudan, the international community could get Sudan to accept an extension to the AMIS mandate on the ground, and within 15 days of that decision, a GOS decision to accept a UN deployment. This assumption is an important benchmark because the UN security resolution condemning Sudan would require Russian and Chinese approval. Furthermore, this assumption also directly connected the other two lines, NATO and UN force generation. Without the condemning resolution, other key actors like NATO or the DPKO would not see the international resolve to begin their military planning processes. Unfortunately, the condemning resolution was connected not only to the Russian and Chinese votes on the UNSC, but also back to US resolve to commit ground forces to Darfur.

Recognizing NATO's decision process for force employment is also imperative. The first step in the NAC's political military estimate process is to publish an "initiating directive" to SACEUR. With this document, SHAPE can begin planning and developing a concept of the operation, which SACEUR eventually briefs to the NAC for their approval. Once the NAC approves the concept, SHAPE can develop an operational plan (OPLAN). Included with the OPLAN are two key documents, the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements, commonly knows as a troop list and the Rules of Engagement. Once the NAC approves the OPLAN, they send an execution directive to SACEUR and the NATO deployment process begins.[38] This

process is lengthy and depends upon the will of the alliance to support the operation. The DoD and State planners in Brussels, Belgium were quite certain that the NAC would not willingly support a NATO role in Darfur--even one that was limited to being a catalyst for a UN/AMIS relief in place without a heavy commitment from the US military. In addition, the "best case" scenario assessed a minimum ninety-day requirement from NAC planning authorization to its deployment approval. More importantly, they viewed that gaining NAC planning authorization began with a UNSCR condemning Sudan and UN approval to deploy NATO forces following authorization of a Chapter VII deployment. In short, the UN's two resolutions inextricably bracketed NATO's process to contribute forces.

The USG process hinged on State's or the Pentagon's ability to affect two presidential decisions through the IA, a force option and a deployment order. This IA process would occur through a series of DC and Principals Committee (PC) meetings that would be based on the products delivered by the Pentagon's Joint Operations Planning and Execution System, or JOPES, now known as the Joint Operations Planning System. The Chairman of the JS could initiate the JOPES process without Secretary of Defense (SecDef) approval by issuing one of his combatant commander's (COCOM) a planning order to conduct a commander's estimate and develop some broad concepts.[39] Unlike NATO and the UN, beginning planning was not that complex. Gaining approval of the force option however, was another matter. The NSC would vet the COCOM's options through a series of DCs and a PC, where the DoD and DoS could argue the merits of the options or "best case," and agree on a single option. State and the Pentagon could disrupt this IA meeting schedule by potentially delaying a decision on any option. When this IA argument was complete, Mr. Hadley, along with the SecDef and SecState would brief the selected option or possible options for presidential decision. Upon decision, the SecDef would issue an alert order approving the COCOM's concept and authorizing DoD departments and agencies to support it, short of actually deploying forces. An alert order is a significant signal to allies that the USG is preparing to act. Although the IA process for gaining a deployment decision would be similar, generally when the President approves a force option, he will defer the deployment process to the Pentagon and particularly to the SecDef.[40] Consequently, the NSC's end state flowed through a Pentagon process to develop military options and an IA one to make presidential decisions that would coerce other actors, like the UNSC, its DPKO, and NATO to support a UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

Capture the Current Situation

Numerous key environmental factors arose in the planning team's analysis that appeared to directly or indirectly shape the NSC's strategic decision space. For instance, AMIS's authorization to operate within Sudan expired in March. If the GOS failed to extend the AMIS authority within Darfur, the problem of replacing AMIS with UN forces was moot. AMIS forces were for the most part on a six-month rotation schedule.[41] Selecting US, NATO, and UN deployment dates around these rotation schedules could prevent unnecessary strains on an already fragile logistic system. From a Bush Administration perspective, congressional elections during November 2006 indirectly affected the NSC's decision space. Although not explicitly stated, the NSC's intent was to demonstrate the Administration's proactive approach to the Darfur crisis before the election, and not appear to be blind-sided by potentially horrific events as it had been by Hurricane Katrina. For the UN, the selection of a new Secretary General and protecting Annan's legacy, although not essential to the current situation, may have had an indirect effect on the NSC's strategic decision space.[42] For NATO, its TOA dates from coalition forces to ISAF by October 2006, may have affected the NAC and SHAPE's ability to wrestle with an emerging crisis. Planners can never escape terrain and weather, and because the Darfur region turns to mud from early August to mid September, weather would affect training and deployment timelines and was worth considering.[43]

Analyze the Strategic Decision Space

Figure 2 reflects the planning team's input on the matrix. The first step in analyzing the matrix is to identify by each actor, where their respective decisions are located in time, and the processes that allow the actor to make their decisions. There were two key decisions that the GOS could make: extend the AMIS mandate to enforce the HCA prior to March and authorize the deployment of UN forces by late May. Unfortunately, the planning team could not evaluate any decision-making processes within President Bashir's authoritarian dictatorship. The AU had no key decisions. The USG had two key decisions. The President had to approve a COCOM force option by mid March and then authorize the force's deployment by late May. In each case, the JOPES process would develop the military requirements to drive the IA process toward these two decisions. The UNSC also had two key decisions. It had to pass its condemnation resolution in early March and approve a Chapter VII mission in Sudan by late May. Both of these UNSC political decisions would have to overcome the power of the five permanent member votes on the council and determine the pace of DPKO's force generation process. NATO had three difficult decisions: authorize planning in early March, approve SACEUR's

concept in April, and finally, authorize the force's deployment by early June. Each of the NATO decisions would be based on the NAC's political willingness to allow SACEUR to move forward with military planning.
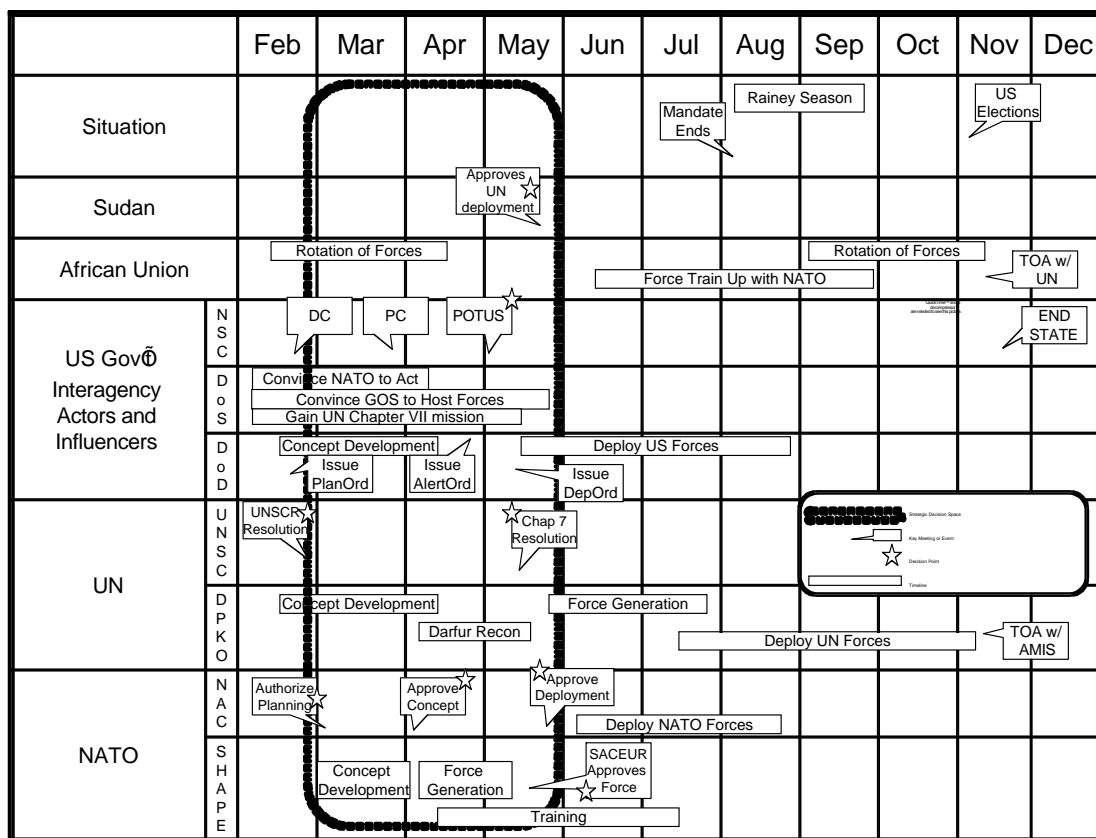

Figure 2. Darfur Strategic Decision Space, mid-February 2006

The second step in analyzing the matrix is to isolate those decisions that required NSC's influence to cause another actor's decision and achieve the NSC's end state. Since the NSC was attempting to influence the decisions in Sudan, NATO, and the UN, gaining the presidential decision on a large US force option would first propel the UNSC and NATO into initial action and subsequently coerce the GOS to accept a large UN force in Darfur. Consequently, the first key decision and catalyst for the NSC's way ahead was deciding on a US force option for Darfur. With a favorable decision, State would be armed to move along its three influencing lines of operation. Without it, movement along those lines toward the desired end would be stalled. Therefore, because the President's "force option decision" was the prime mover for UN and NATO decisions to begin their force generation processes, it was the left limit of the NSC's strategic decision space.

With these two actors moving in a positive direction, the GOS would be forced to either adapt or concede to the new momentum towards a peacekeeping operation in Darfur. Given

this new vulnerability, when State delivered a positive Sudan decision, the UNSC could pass a Chapter VII resolution and the DPKO could complete its force generation process. With a UN force, NATO could make its third key decision that authorized a deployment of forces. Therefore, the right limit to the NSC's strategic decision space was the GOS's decision to host UN forces. With these two limits, a US force option in early March and Sudanese capitulation in late May, the time period for the NSC to make or either influence other actor decisions was a 90 day strategic window to achieve the USG's desired end state.

In summary, the Darfur strategic decision space matrix revealed a window of opportunity for the NSC and IA to generate the means through a variety of actors to achieve its end. First, by identifying the boundaries of the space, the NSC could monitor the JOPES processes to develop the force options to deliver an adequate catalyst to cause the UNSC and NATO to begin their decision processes. Second, the matrix revealed the required timings for DoS lines of operation to influence the GOS, and coerce China and Russia to approve a UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur. Third, understanding other actor decisions and exposing the associated actor processes allows key senior leaders to recognize how their decisions impact other IA actors. For instance, if the NAC failed to authorize SACEUR to begin military planning by mid-March, the NSC could orient leaders within State and the Pentagon to influence the actor. Tracking these decisions and their connections may allow the NSC to manage its ways more effectively and also orient its senior leadership within the IA toward an end state.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper has been to explore the value of revealing strategic decision space on a DSM to senior leaders within the USG's IA. When leaders understand how time relates to the other decisions key actors make, it should allow these leaders the opportunity to better manage their ways and means to support the NSC's end state. Collectively, this space offers the NSC IA team a window of opportunity to achieve a national end state. This paper defined this space as the amount of time that the NSC requires to examine and fully develop the ways, manage the means, and influence the decisions of other actors to create the conditions for a USG security end.

To discover this space's left and right hand limits, this research offered planners a series of steps to follow. First, IA planners at the PCC level should determine and agree on the strategic end state that the NSC is attempting to achieve. Then, they must identify and characterize the key actors that can affect the NSC's end state. This characterization should include each actor's own end state and its vulnerabilities and invulnerabilities to the USG's

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instruments of powers. Planners should then gain an understanding of the key decisions these actors must make and the associated processes they use to make them. Finally, planners should look for environmental factors that could affect the NSC's strategic decision space. Once planners complete these steps, they must input these key actor decisions on to a hybrid form of the Army's DSM. An analysis of the amount of time and required conditions for each actor to make a decision that favors the NSC's end state should reveal to the planners the left and right limits of this end.

The Darfur planning case study exposed several key points about discovering and then utilizing this space to achieve an NSC strategic objective. Perhaps the most important point is to gain an accurate assessment of each actor's end state as it opposes or supports the NSC's end. This analysis allows a USG IA planning team to develop a unified approach to influence actors or marginalize those who oppose the NSC. In the Darfur case study, State developed a series of lines of operation to gain the support required to move the international community toward a stronger international presence in the Darfur region. In support of moving along these lines of operation, the case study found the catalysts required to persuade allies and coerce hostile actors toward making decisions in favor of US objectives. For instance, NATO would not authorize SACEUR to begin conceptual planning to support AMIS without the suggestion of a strong US force option. This presidential catalyst would also push the UNSC into action, and could subsequently force the GOS to recognize that international will was now moving toward a UN presence in Darfur. Finally, recognizing the sequence of decisions would allow the NSC to prioritize US IA effort is critical. The NSC end state hinged on a GOS decision to authorize UN forces in Sudan; consequently, IA planners could sequence US, NATO, and UN decisions in order to coerce the GOS to accept this reality.

On 31 August 2006, the UNSCR adopted resolution 1706. This resolution condemned Sudan for its behavior in Darfur and requested that the regime accept the presence of a large UN/AMIS force in the damaged region.[44] Unfortunately, the UNSC adopted the resolution six months after Ambassador Bolton and the planners wanted to accomplish this critical step as a way to inhibit the GOS. The USG was able to achieve this milestone without a large force option and a subsequent NATO one. However, 2006 ended in Darfur without a UN presence, and as of March 2007, there has been no GOS decision to support one. Meanwhile, the Janjaweed continue their attacks on the people of Darfur and the humanitarian efforts to support them. In summary, the GOS's status quo is still intact, the UN has passed another empty resolution, and the NSC has failed to achieve its end state. Perhaps had the NSC exercised such a matrix to visualize this window of opportunity and integrate the time available to organize

their way toward a UN force in Darfur, the nation would have achieved a better outcome for these unfortunate refugees. The beauty of understanding strategic decision space is that the USG, NATO, and the UN can still push the GOS into action if leaders within the NSC recognize the decisions, conditions, and sequencing required to open this window of opportunity.

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